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EUROPEAN COUNCIL, LUXEMBOURG

1/2 DECEMBER 1980

FISHERIES

Brief by Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

OBJECTIVE

1. To avoid substantive discussion.

POINTS TO MAKE

2. We are all agreed on the importance of the end of year deadline we endorsed in Venice. Fisheries Ministers are making good progress towards a fair CFP settlement. Most difficult issues remain access and quotas: Fisheries Ministers should keep up their work so as to reach a settlement on these and other outstanding issues.

(If necessary)

2. The Council has already adopted the necessary guidelines and timetable for a settlement in its Declaration of 30 May. No objection to the European Council reaffirming the Declaration as a whole but difficult to see what useful contribution any other statement could make.

BACKGROUND

3. There is no need to discuss the substance of the negotiation at the European Council, other, perhaps, than to note the progress already made by Fisheries Ministers and to reaffirm the importance of the deadline. Certain delegations could conceivably wish to include the issue in a general statement on the need to resolve Community problems. We need not object to this, provided the statement makes no explicit linkages to other issues and does not attempt to introduce criteria or a timetable differing from those adopted by the Council on 30 May.

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We are not, however, in favour of the Presidency conclusions covering everything the Heads of Government discuss.

4. Discussions in the Fisheries Council have continued to make progress. On 29 September, the Council adopted a comprehensive conservation regulation. On 28 October, the Council agreed in principle to Community control and enforcement measures. At the last meeting on 17/18 November, the Council agreed that access must be settled with quotas. The Presidency also produced compromise quota proposals which made a significant movement towards United Kingdom objectives by allocating to us a share of the seven principal species nearer to our average catch over recent years. In order to maintain momentum, whilst allowing further opportunities for bilateral contacts, the Luxembourg President suspended the 17-18 November meeting which is still formally in session. The main difficulty on quotas has been that the Commission's proposals have so far been too generous to Denmark and less than generous to the United Kingdom, France and Germany. The French have reacted strongly to the quota proposals which they claim limit them more than anyone else. On access several member states remain suspicious of our demands, but United Kingdom Ministers are seeking to make progress bilaterally on our demands for an essentially exclusive 12-mile limit and some preference beyond. A new, formal, Commission proposal on this element is perhaps unlikely to be put forward until the last moment.

5. No firm date has yet been fixed for the resumption of the November meeting. The next formal meeting is scheduled for 15-16 December.

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

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